

From: Andrew Vinton
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 11:12pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Dear Sirs,

I am software developer, as well as a user of commercial software. I firmly believe that we all benefit from free and fair competition in the software market place.

Over many years, I have watched Microsoft use their near monopoly in the computer operating system market to drive competitors into obscurity or out of business. They have used predatory pricing tactics. They have coerced computer vendors to prevent them from installing competing software on computers that the vendors are offering for sale. The best known examples are their dealings with competitors to Microsoft Word and Internet Explorer. Their recent attempts to steal the market for Java from Sun Microsystems and others are not well known to the general public, but no less ruthless.

When I heard that the Justice Department was suing Microsoft, I hoped that something would be done to curb Microsoft's behavior and restore a little balance to the market place. What I am hearing about the proposed settlement indicates to me that in the short term very little will be done, and that in the long term, Microsoft will be largely trusted to monitor its own compliance with the few restrictions that are imposed. The company's consistent history of ruthlessness tells me that any such monitoring will be worthless.

Microsoft has worked very hard to negotiate a settlement that will not hurt them in any way. I fear that they have succeeded. This distresses me because I am convinced that they will conclude that there is no reason for them not to continue their misbehavior.

Sincerely,

Andy Vinton
vinton@acm.org